



Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery
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February 18, 2009

Representative Paul Seaton
State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Seaton:

The Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery appreciates your efforts with House Bill 43. We rely upon, in part, on shellfish seed sales to cover our operating expenses. Geoducks and their high value offer us the best opportunity to achieve our sales goals. To date, the demand has not been as originally projected causing a perpetual shortfall in revenue. Opening additional markets in south-central Alaska will help alleviate this deficit.

We are often frustrated by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and their regulation of transport. It is ironic that we can transport a non-indigenous species such as oysters and cannot transport a native species outside what is considered its natural range. The fact that it may be non reproductive in South-central Alaska should make management easy.

I would suggest we promote a cooperative demonstration project exploring the feasibility of geoduck farming in south-central Alaska headed by the Department of Fish and Game, the Department of Commerce, and the Chugach Regional Resources Commission. The shellfish hatchery can provide geoduck seed for such an effort.

Sincerely,

Jeff Hetrick
Director



February 20, 2009

Rep. Paul Seaton
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Seaton:

The Alaskan Shellfish Growers Association (ASGA) supports House Bill 43 and applauds your efforts to stimulate the growth of shellfish aquaculture throughout the state.

Some might criticize the bill because it would allow the introduction of this highly valuable species of shellfish beyond its “natural range.” This is a concept that ASGA played a key role in removing from ADF&G’s mariculture regulations several years ago.

Our argument is the “natural range” is elusive and aquatic organisms are continually responding to changing environmental conditions, such as water temperatures, availability of predator and prey, and, as we’re now discovering, the amount of carbon in the water column. Just ask fisheries scientists about the shifting “natural range” of Pollock in the Bering Sea or the increasing number of salmon being caught near Barrow.

Important to consider is that geoducks are indigenous to Alaska and there is virtually no chance of spreading disease or polluting the gene pool of wild stocks if this bill is approved and implemented. Alaska has perhaps the strictest regulations in the country governing the transfer of shellfish within the state, and every movement of juvenile shellfish or “spat” must be approved by ADF&G’s pathologist. And, since there are no wild stocks of geoducks north of Cape Suckling, there is not gene pool that could be compromised by their introduction to the area.

Geoducks are the world’s largest burrowing clams and some of the most valuable seafood harvested in Alaska. These are not zebra mussels or some other dangerous invasive species. The worst that could happen is that the clams will thrive and create new wealth in coastal areas where local residents are leaving because there are no jobs.

In short, HB 43 is a good bill and we support it.

Sincerely,

Rodger Painter
ASGA President